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Invasive pneumococcal disease in adults in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany

10.1111/j.1469-0691.2006.01518.x

The recent paper in *CMI* by Reinert *et al*. [1] presented interesting information on invasive pneumococcal disease in adults in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany, which was collected prospectively. It was reported that blood cultures were obtained in 464 cases, and that 152 of these (only 11 grew *Streptococcus pneumoniae*) were positive. However, no information was provided concerning the 141 non-pneumococci isolates. These data are of extreme importance, as hardly any data concerning bacteraemic community-acquired pneumonia are available. It was also reported that 112 of 464 patients were receiving antibiotic treatment when the blood cultures were inoculated. It would be interesting to know how many of these 112 blood cultures were positive and which pathogens were cultured.

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REPLY FROM PROFESSOR REINERT

Our prospective population-based survey [1] of invasive pneumococcal disease (IPD) among adults in North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany, included 202 of the 386 hospitals in the region, and the 27 microbiological laboratories that submitted reports of IPD in these hospitals to the National Reference Centre for Streptococci (NRCS). In addition, the degree of under-reporting in this region was evaluated. All 27 laboratories were asked to provide complete laboratory records on all cases of IPD, and 16 were able to do so. Data concerning all IPD isolates sent by each of these 16 laboratories to the NRCS were linked to the databases of each laboratory's information system. Moreover, in two additional studies, the frequency of obtaining blood cultures, as well as the incidence of previous antibiotic therapy, was analysed in patients with community-acquired pneumonia (CAP). For the year 2000, the frequency of obtaining blood cultures was determined for patients admitted to three university hospitals (Aachen, Düsseldorf and Cologne) with CAP. In addition, in 2001, the frequency of antibiotic treatment before blood cultures were obtained from CAP patients was determined by a detailed analysis of patient histories. As outlined in our paper in *CMI* [1], all cases with the diagnosis of CAP (all diagnostic positions on the discharge summary) were identified *retrospectively* on the basis of ICD-10 codes (J13, J15.9, J18.0, J18.9). Cases were linked with data in the laboratory information systems of each hospital's microbiological laboratory.

Outcome data were obtained for all patients from the discharge files of the individual hospitals. Therefore, we are not able to provide the prospective data requested by Professor Shah. However, we would like to share the retrospective data for the 152 cases with positive blood